



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



935TH WELCOMED HOME

A welcome home ceremony for 19 soldiers of Detachment 1, Company B, 935th Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, was held April 30 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Rapid City, following a nine-month deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Rapid City-based 935th's mission was to provide aviation maintenance and repair support to the 35th Combat Aviation Brigade. The unit specializes in maintenance and repair of rotary-wing aircraft to include the UH-60 Black Hawk, OH-58 Kiowa and other U.S. Army rotary aircraft.

"You all should be proud of your soldiers. I'm very proud of them and the mission they accomplished," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 John Wurtz, 935th commander, during the ceremony. "To the families and loved ones of these soldiers – thank you for lending us your soldiers."

Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the SDNG, were featured speakers at the ceremony.

Maj. Gen. Reisch echoed the sentiment made by Wurtz and reminded the unit members and guests of the sacrifices the families make while their soldiers are deployed.

"We don't realize what the families have to contend with as their service members are deployed," said Reisch. "The sacrifices they make and the support they give to their soldier help to ensure they remain focused on their mission, and they did an impeccable job."

As the 935th transitions from their federal mission back to their role as part of the state militia, Gov. Daugaard expressed his relief in having the soldiers back in the state. "You have been serving our nation and not our state, and I thank each of you for your service to our nation," said Daugaard. "The state has experienced the benefits of having you here, and we are very thankful you are home."



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ZIMMERMAN AND CLAUSSEN ATTEND AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS SYMPOSIUM

Secretary Zimmerman and Director Claussen represented the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs at the American Indian Veterans Symposium held in Rapid City this week. The symposium was hosted by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and had over 150 in attendance.

With tribes represented from South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska, this conference addressed VA healthcare, Tribal health and IHS reimbursements, home health, suicide prevention, women veterans, homelessness, work opportunities, veteran owned business opportunities and housing.

Directors Patrick Kelly (Sioux Falls VA Health Care System) and Stephen DiStasio (VA Black Hills Health Care System) were also in attendance and responded to many of the questions asked by the veterans.

During the conference, CTVSO Robert Dunsmore



(County Veterans Service Officer for Dewey County and Tribal Veterans Service Officer for Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe) presented John Garcia (Deputy Assistant Director to the United States Department of the VA) with a flag that had been flown at the Twin Towers site on 9-11. Director Claussen and Secretary Zimmerman were invited to participate in the flag ceremony.

SAVE YOUR DAKOTAMART RECEIPTS

Operations Black Hills Cabin (OBHC) is now a participant in the Lynn's DakotaMart "We Care Program". Customers at any of the Lynn's DakotaMarts can save their receipts and send them to OBHC, and for every \$10,000 in receipts, the Cabin will get \$100. DakotaMart receipts should be sent to:
Operation Black Hills Cabin
PO Box 855
Custer, SD 57730.



TWO SD EMPLOYERS NAMED SEMIFINALISTS FOR 2013 FREEDOM AWARD

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense operational committee, announced that two South Dakota employers have been selected as semifinalists for the 2013 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The Freedom Award is the DoD's highest honor for employers that provide extraordinary support to their Guard and Reserve employees. This year, 138 semifinalists stood out among 2,899 employers nominated by a Guard or Reserve employee.

The South Dakota employers named semifinalists are **Black Hills Corporation**, Rapid City; and **Yankton Federal Prison Camp**, Yankton. More than one million Americans serve in the National Guard and Reserve, playing a critical role in both combat and humanitarian missions. The Freedom Award provides these service members with an opportunity to recognize civilian employers that go above and beyond in supporting their service. Employers selected as semifinalists assist Guard and Reserve employees through formal and informal initiatives, including setting veteran hiring goals, establishing military employee liaisons, providing childcare for deployed employees, arranging care package drives, and granting additional leave for military employees and family members before and after deployments.

"Freedom Award semifinalists stand out for their extraordinary support and steadfast commitment to our nation's Citizen Warriors," said ESGR Executive Director Ronald G. Young. "National Guard and Reserve members show tremendous resolve overseas and during times of domestic crises. Our nation owes a special debt of gratitude to employers enabling these brave men and women to serve."

ESGR will announce the 2013 Freedom Award finalists next month after a review board comprised of military and civilian leaders selects the 30 most supportive employers. Up to 15 award recipients will be announced early this summer and honored in Washington, D.C. in September at the 18th annual Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award ceremony.

A complete list of Freedom Award semifinalists from each state is available at www.FreedomAward.mil under the Media Tab in the Press Releases section.

ZIMMERMAN ATTENDS VVA CONFERENCE

Secretary Zimmerman attended the Vietnam Veterans of America Conference in Rapid City this past weekend. Representatives from Senators Johnson and Thune and Congresswoman Noem's office were in attendance. Collectively they addressed the following issues with the VVA members: homelessness, future of VABHHCS services, backlog, suicide, hiring heroes, telehealth, housing, COLA, concurrent receipt and the Hot Springs save the VA campaign.

Secretary Zimmerman briefed the VVA members on the delivery of services study, Buffalo Ridge, veteran license plates, South Dakota Veterans Council meeting, South Dakota Veterans Commission meeting, eFiling, homelessness, Claims office, drone medals and the bids received for the construction of the state veterans home in Hot Springs.

Attendees participated in a Q & A session with focus on PTSD, COLA funding and drone medal/citation.



ZIMMERMAN ATTENDS SDNA CONFERENCE

Secretary Zimmerman addressed publishers/editors at the South Dakota Newspaper Association's (SDNA) 131st annual conference in Rapid City this past weekend. This conference was a joint North Dakota/South Dakota conference.

During his presentation Secretary Zimmerman stressed the Department's goal to reach all of South Dakota's veterans and outlined the role that the editors and publishers can play in getting the message to our veterans regarding benefits and services available to them and their family. Zimmerman reviewed his new mission and vision positions for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and asked all in attendance to partner with the Department in reaching our veterans.

The SDNA represents the state's 130 weekly and daily newspapers. You can learn more about SDNA on their Facebook page—

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/South-Dakota-Newspaper-Association/75315570666>.



OLIVA ADDRESSES COMMUNITY LEADERS IN BRITTON

Steve Oliva, Veterans Field Officer with the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, addressed the Glacial Lakes Area Development Association (GLAD) in Britton last week.

GLAD is the regional economic development organization serving the Greater Marshall County Area assisting individuals as well as supporting all industries with business development goals.

Scott Amundson, GLAD Executive Director, felt it was important for his membership to understand the benefits and services provided to South Dakota's veterans.

Dave Daberkow (Marshall County VSO), Bruce Howell (former CVSO and current VFW District Commander), County Commissioners, business leaders and Representative Susan Wismer (District 1) were in attendance at the luncheon meeting.



Steve Oliva, Bruce Howell and Dave Daberkow

GUARD ANNOUNCES OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The South Dakota National Guard is pleased to announce 2nd Lt. Richard Bauman, of Pierre, is this year's recipient of the Lieutenant Colonel John J. Steele award, naming him the SDNG's Lieutenant of the Year.

The Lieutenant Colonel John J. Steele award was established in 1968 to annually recognize the most outstanding lieutenant in the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard. Selection is based on exceptional qualities of leadership, values and performance.

Bauman, who serves as a tactical intelligence officer for the 109th Regional Support Group in Rapid City, was selected as the most exceptional lieutenant within the 109th Group, and competed against lieutenants from each of the SDNG's major commands.

"2nd Lt. Bauman has clearly demonstrated himself to be an exceptional officer," said Col. Bill Freidel, 109th Group commander. "He has been inspirational in his pride and professionalism as a junior officer and has been a distinguished example of leadership within the South Dakota National Guard and is very deserving of this award." "His desires, interests and enthusiasm mirror the leadership, loyalty and initiative categories on which this award is based on," said Capt. Andrew Thimgan, 109th Group Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment commander. "2nd Lt. Bauman is an inspiring and committed leader who is fully qualified and supports the goals of his leadership and subordinates alike."

"It's very humbling," said Bauman of receiving the award. "To be named along with the other quality officers who have won this award in the past is an honor – I feel lucky to be included in that group."

As a tactical intelligence officer, Bauman provides detailed intelligence reports and weather information for the 109th Group, and has served with the unit for more than a year. With more than 21 years of total service in the military, Bauman has spent nearly 20 of those years as an enlisted Soldier in the communications, intelligence and civil affairs fields. In 2003 and 2007, he deployed in support of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, and also served in Bosnia in 1997 as a part of Operation Joint Endeavor.

In addition to his responsibilities in the National Guard, Bauman also serves as a police officer for the Pierre Police Department. He said the support of his employer has made a positive impact on him and his family. "The Pierre Police Department has been very supportive of me and my family during my deployments and military career," said Bauman, who has served seven years on the force. "They are great about giving me time off work and have chipped in to help install windows or shovel snow from the sidewalk at my home."

Bauman said his family – wife, Kari, and son, Izaak, 3 – have also been a big supporter of him during his career and deployments. "I couldn't ask for a better wife and family," he said. "She is such a strong supporter and partner, and I wouldn't be where I am today without her."



GUARD ANNOUNCES WARRANT OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The South Dakota Army National Guard is pleased to announce Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ben Smetana, of Sioux Falls, is this year's recipient of the CW4 Michael F. O'Connor award, naming him the SDARNG's Warrant Officer of the Year.

The CW4 Michael F. O'Connor award was established to recognize the most outstanding warrant officer in the South Dakota Army National Guard. Selection is based on exceptional qualities of technical knowledge, leadership, dedication and initiative.

Smetana, who serves as a military personnel technician for the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) of Sioux Falls, was selected as the most exceptional warrant officer within the entire 196th Brigade, and competed against warrant officers from each of the SDARNG's major commands.

"CW2 Smetana always performs his duties and accomplishes all assigned missions with the utmost professionalism," said Col. Kevin Griesse, brigade commander, 196th MEB. "His accomplishments and dedication to duty over the past year have definitely earned him the distinction of being recognized as the South Dakota National Guard's most outstanding warrant officer of the year."

"I have had the privilege to work with CW2 Smetana...and have found him nothing short of exceptional as a leader and technical expert in his field," said Capt. Shannon Machmiller, 196th MEB Headquarters and Headquarters Company detachment commander. "He is a dynamic leader with attributes that far exceed the normal warrant officer."

"I am extremely honored to be presented with this award," said Smetana. "I didn't expect to receive the award with such a great field of warrant officers in this year's competition."

Smetana has served in the 196th for the past four years, where he is responsible for the personnel readiness of the brigade with emphasis on units that are preparing for deployment in support of overseas contingency operations. Smetana knows the importance of preparing units for war first hand, having deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2007. He also has more than 13 years of total service in the SDARNG.

Smetana is the son of Lisa Collins, of Centerville, and Allen Smetana from Pennsylvania.

Smetana commented that any one of the warrant officer candidates for the O'Connor award were just as deserving to receive it.

"I competed against outstanding individuals that were equally deserving of this award," said Smetana.



Upcoming Events

May 3-5—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood
May 7—Career Fair—Yankton (1200 W. 21st Street) 1:00 pm
May 11—Military Order of the Purple Heart State Convention (1519 W 51st Street) - Sioux Falls
May 11—Yellow Ribbon for the 935th—Rapid City
May 15—Sioux Falls Vets Center Open House—3200 W. 49th Street—11:00 am—2:00 pm.
May 19—Yellow Ribbon for the 927th—Sioux Falls
May 21—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Sturgis Veterans Club (868 Main Street) - 10:00 am
May 22—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Pierre American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street) - 10:00 am
May 23—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Brookings City/County Bldg. (520 3rd Street) - 10:00 am
May 24—Hiring our Hero Veterans—Pierre American Legion—10:00 am
Jun. 6-9—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota Hotel/Conference Center—Rapid City
Jun. 13-16—VFW State Convention—Watertown Convention Center
Jun. 19—Hiring our Hero Veterans—TREA (1981 E. Centre Street) - Rapid City—10:00 am
Jul. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
Jul. 8—SD Veterans Council—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:30 am
Jul. 26—Korean War Commemoration Display—SDNG Museum—Pierre
Jul. 27—Korean War Wreath Laying Ceremony at the SD State Capitol—Pierre
Jul. 31— Aug. 4—American Veterans Traveling Tribute—Hot Springs
Aug. 4—Freedom Poker Ride—Hot Springs
Aug. 24-25—Freedom Bird 2013—W. H. Lyon Fairgrounds—Sioux Falls 10:00 am—5:00 pm
Aug. 26-28—VSO Annual Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
Sep. 11—Stand Down—Wagner
Sep. 13—Stand Down Watertown
Sep. 20—Stand Down—Sioux Falls—VFW Post 628 (3601 S. Minnesota Ave.) 8:00 am—3:00 pm
Sep. 24—Stand Down—Aberdeen
Oct. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
Dec. 15—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery—10:00 am

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us
Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>

